

CLAIMS:

1. A generally rectangular carton configured for automated loading of a product, the carton comprising:
- 5 a top panel and a bottom panel opposite the top panel;
- a pair of side panels, each side panel extending between edges of the top and bottom panels;
- a front panel extending between edges of the top, 10 bottom, and side panels;
- a back panel opposite the front panel extending between edges of the top, bottom, and side panels; and
- a window opening in the front panel selectively accessible via a hinged panel, the hinged panel having a 15 front portion and a side portion adjacent thereto, the side portion being slidable in a substantially protected region between one of the side panels and a secondary side panel adjacent the one of the side panels, the protected region being effective to reduce or avoid 20 interference between the side portion and the product.
2. A carton according to claim 1, wherein the protected region is effective to reduce or avoid interference between the side portion and the product 25 during loading of the product into the carton.
3. A carton according to claim 1, wherein the protected region is effective to reduce or avoid interference with the product during pivoting of the 30 hinged panel.
4. A carton according to claim 1, wherein the carton includes a window opening in the back panel, the window opening being accessible by pivoting a portion of 35 the back panel relative to the remainder of the back

panel.

5. A carton according to claim 4, wherein the  
portion of the back panel is foldable to present a  
5 display surface formed thereon.

6. A carton according to claim 5, wherein the  
portion of the back panel includes a tab insertable into  
a slot formed in one of the top and bottom panels when  
10 the portion of the back panel is folded to present the  
display surface formed thereon.

7. A carton according to claim 6, wherein the  
carton is convertible between a first position permitting  
15 access to product within the carton via the window  
opening in the front panel and a second position  
permitting access to product within the carton via the  
window opening in the back panel.

20 8. A carton for containing one or more products,  
the carton comprising:

a plurality of panels forming the carton, including  
a first panel;

a first product dispensing configuration wherein the  
25 product is accessible through a window formed in the  
first panel; and

a door selectively providing access to the first  
window, the door having a first portion being slidable  
between substantially adjacent second and third panels  
30 effective to reduce interference between the product and  
the door portion during opening and closing of the door.

9. A carton according to claim 8, wherein the  
carton is convertible between the first product  
35 dispensing configuration a second product dispensing

configuration effective to allow product access through a window formed in a fourth panel.

10. A carton according to claim 9, wherein the  
5 fourth panel is located opposite the first panel.

11. A carton according to claim 10, wherein the door comprises a second portion being slidable between substantially adjacent fifth and sixth panels, the fifth  
10 and sixth panels disposed opposite the third and fourth panels.

12. A carton according to claim 11, wherein the first and second portions of the door are effective to  
15 limit the outward extension of the door relative to the first panel.

13. A method of loading product into the interior of a carton, the method comprising:  
20 providing a carton having a plurality of panels;  
providing a panel of the carton with a hinged door selectively permitting access to the interior of the carton, the hinged door having at least one side portion extending between the door and the carton;  
25 loading the product into the interior of the carton;  
and

positioning the side portion of the door to be slidable between two substantially adjacent panels of the carton to limit or avoid interference between the side  
30 portion of the hinged door and the product during the loading of the product into the interior of the carton.

14. A method of loading product into the interior of a carton according to claim 13, including adapting the  
35 side portion to limit the opening of the door.

15. A method of loading product into the interior of a carton according to claim 13, wherein a window opening is provided in a panel different from the panel having a hinged door.

5

16. A method for forming a carton from a blank, the blank comprising a front panel having a window opening provided therein, a pair of primary side panels attached to opposite edges of the front panel, and a door hinged relative to the front for selectively permitting access to the window opening of the front panel, the method comprising:

providing the front and primary side panels in a substantially coplanar arrangement;

15 aligning side portions of the door with the primary side panels while the front and primary side panels remain substantially coplanar; and

positioning a secondary side panel adjacent to each of the primary side panels such that the respective side portion of the door is slidable between the primary and secondary side panels of the formed carton.

17. A method for forming a carton according to claim 16, wherein the blank comprises a top panel and a bottom panel attached to opposite edges of the front panel, the front panel edges having the top and bottom panels attached thereto being different from the front panel edges having the primary side panels attached thereto, a back panel attached to edges of the top and bottom panels opposite the edges of the back panel having the front panel attached thereto, the back panel having a pair of tertiary side panels attached thereto, the back panel edges having the tertiary side panels attached thereto being different from the back panel edges having the top and bottom panels attached thereto.

18. A method for forming a carton according to claim 17, comprising providing the carton blank in a collapsed state wherein the front and primary side panels are substantially coplanar and the back and tertiary side panels are substantially coplanar, and the front and primary side panels and the back and tertiary side panels are generally adjacent.

19. A method for forming a carton according to claim 18, comprising shifting the carton blank from the collapsed state to an upright state wherein the top and bottom panels are substantially normal to the front and back panels while the primary side panels remain substantially coplanar with the front panel and the tertiary side panels remain substantially coplanar with the back panel to enable insertion of one or more products between the top, bottom, front, and back panels.

20 ~~21~~. A method for forming a carton according to claim 20, comprising folding the primary side panels into a substantially normal alignment with the front panel and folding the tertiary side panels into a substantially normal alignment with the back panel to close the carton.

21 ~~22~~. A method for forming a carton according to claim 21, wherein the back panel comprises an opening for permitting access to the interior of the formed carton.

22 ~~23~~. A carton for containing one or more products, the carton comprising:

a plurality of panels forming the carton, including a first panel;

a window formed in the first panel to provide access to the product;

a door hinged relative to the first panel selectively providing access to the window, the door having a first side portion and a second side portion opposite the first side portion, the first and second side portions at least partially extending between the door and the carton; and

means for limiting interference between the product and the first and second side portions of the door.

10 <sup>23</sup>24. A carton according to claim 23, comprising means for limiting the outward extension of the door relative to the first panel.

15 <sup>25</sup>25. A carton according to claim 24, comprising means for providing access to the product via an opening different from the window.